“The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Gilman Perkins

Junior English – Mr. Daniels

Using the quotes below, answer the following questions.

"It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer. A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity but that would be asking too much of fate!"   
  
***Questions:***

1. How would you describe the story's setting?
2. How and why is the setting significant?

"John is a physician, and—perhaps—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster."   
  
***Questions:***

1. How would you describe the narrator's husband?
2. What is the narrator’s tone in this section?

"Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good."   
  
***Questions:***

1. What does the narrator believe would be the best cure for her?
2. How does this contrast with what her husband and brother say?

"Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able, -to dress and entertain, and order things.   
  
It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!   
  
At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.   
  
He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.   
  
"You know the place is doing you good," he said, "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental." "Then do let us go downstairs," I said, "there are such pretty rooms there."   
  
Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.   
  
But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things. It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim. I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.   
  
Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deepshaded arbors, the riotous old fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees. Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.   
  
I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me. But I find I get pretty tired when I try."   
  
***Questions:***

1. How does the narration mimic the narrator's mental state?
2. Point out digressions and discuss why the narrator might digress during her account.

"And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head."

***Question:***

1. What does this passage suggest about the relationship between the narrator and her husband?
2. How would you characterize the narrator? How would you characterize her husband?

"And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!"   
  
***Questions:***

1. What is the significance of the woman behind the yellow wallpaper?

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"   
  
I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder. "I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back! "   
  
Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!"   
  
***Questions:***

1. What does the narrator mean by, "I got out at last?"
2. What does the ending of this story suggest about the woman behind the wallpaper?
3. How are this woman and the wallpaper itself symbolic?
4. Discuss the metaphor of the window in relationship to "getting out."